

# The Parish Gazette

ADVENT / CHRISTMAS

A.D. 2021

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S. John's Church  
Passaic, New Jersey



## SAINT JOHN'S CHURCH

*An Anglo-Catholic Parish in the Episcopal Diocese of Newark*

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### Parish Photo Album

[www.flickr.com/photos/sjohnschurch/sets/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/sjohnschurch/sets/)

### Facebook Page



<https://www.facebook.com/SaintJohnsChurchInPassaic>

## FROM THE PRIEST-IN-CHARGE...

Advent/Christmas 2021



### PARISH SEAL AND MOTTO

*We remember his death; We proclaim his resurrection; We await his coming in glory.*

My dear sisters and brothers,

Those familiar words, or very similar, are at the center of every Eucharistic Prayer we say. They are a succinct and memorable summary of what it means not only to understand Jesus, but to follow him. The verbs are active: "we remember," "we proclaim," and "we await." But not only are they active in the grammatical sense, but they're active too in the sense of doing something. The first two are pretty straightforward that way. But what about waiting? How can that be an active thing that we actually *do*?

Waiting is actually never simply passive. I think the key is in the basic definition of the word "wait" itself: "to remain stationary in readiness or expectation." When we wait, we're actually doing something. And we never wait by itself. We always wait *for* something.

And so what we Christians do with that third action statement is to "remain stationary in readiness and expectation that Jesus will come again." And that, of course, is the basic meaning of Advent. The word "Advent" comes from the Latin *adventus*, which simply means "arrival" or "coming." So Advent is all about the coming of the Lord Jesus, not just once, but twice. The first Coming was when he arrived on earth as a little babe in a barn in a little town

in the ancient Middle East. The second Coming is, well, shrouded by all kinds of myth and mystery and frankly, a lot of nonsense too. And so Advent is a time to prepare for both Comings - to get ready for the Coming of Jesus on earth at Christmas, and to get ready for his eventual return in power and great glory. And we do so with "readiness or expectation." In Advent we renew our readiness for and expectation of Jesus in our lives.

There are some things you can actually *do* to enact your waiting for Jesus this Advent, to actually be ready for Jesus and to properly expect him. Consider some or all of them for your Advent season this year:

- Let Advent be Advent. Consider not decorating for Christmas until after the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent, which is December 19<sup>th</sup> this year. Or, just put up one decoration a day until Dec. 24.
- Christmas is 12 days long, and it begins on December 25 and goes until Epiphany on January 6. Keep all your decorations up until then!
- Make an Advent wreath for your own home, perhaps on your dining room table or a mantle piece. Let the addition of light week by week symbolize for you the Light of Jesus coming into the world.
- If you host a party, consider doing so after December 25 rather than before. Otherwise, it's really an "Advent" party, and plus, you won't be so busy.
- Turn off or limit your social media. There are apps to let you set up what days you can and can't access them. The traditional fasting days are Wednesday and Friday. To start, you might limit yourself to just an hour a day on the days you fast. If you find it difficult to start with that amount, start at a higher level and work toward a full fast for the days and times you select.

All of these practices are intended to help make space in your life and your soul so you can see yourself more clearly, as Jesus already does, and so to better reflect truly holy readiness and expectation. There's one more: And stay in, or return to, community. Participate as fully as you can and as you feel safe in

our worship life of Saint John's. In this Gazette you'll find highlights of our schedule of services for Advent and the Twelve Days of Christmas. Although all services are both in-person and livestreamed, it's safe to attend in-person so you can receive Holy Communion, and see and greet your fellow worshippers, whom you can't see if you're participating by lives-stream only.

I invite all of us to prayerfully and intentionally and proactively consider how best to "remain stationary in readiness or expectation" in the ways that God in Christ is calling on each of us to do:

*Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.  
(Collect for the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Advent.)*

Faithfully,

Father Robert Solon+

# Advent Lessons and Carols with Benediction



*The Ninth Lesson: The Angel Gabriel announces to the Blessed Virgin Mary that she will bear the Son of the Most High (Luke 1:26-38)*

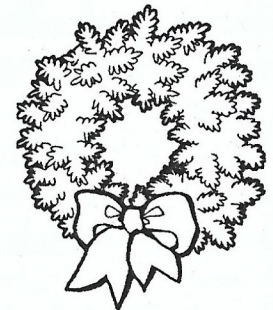
Gaudete Sunday  
12<sup>th</sup> December 2021  
at 4:00 pm

A wonderful way to celebrate the holiday season.

## INTIMATIONS

### A Christmas invitation -

Now is the perfect time to reach out to your friends, neighbors, or co-workers, by inviting them to experience the joy and beauty of a Saint John's Church Christmas. Besides our liturgy, the organ and other music, the candles, flowers and greens, there is love to spare at Saint John's and we welcome all whom you might bring.



### Pledge envelopes -

Our stewardship campaign mailing will be out soon. Please respond as soon as you are able. The new pledge envelopes will be at the rear of the nave by The Third Sunday of Advent, 12<sup>th</sup> December, for you to pick up. Thanks again for your faithful stewardship and love of Saint John's.

### Parish calendars -

The parish calendars for 2022 will also be in the back of the church. They will be mailed to all out of town and all home bound people as well as "Friends of the Parish." If you would like additional calendars, they will be available from the Parish Office. Feel free to ask for more.

### Check writing -

When writing checks to Saint John's for multiple purposes, please try to be very clear on how the funds are to be allocated. It is preferable to use separate checks for pledges, Altar Guild, holy days, etc.; however, if this is not convenient, please indicate how the total is to be divided. Our bookkeeping and accounting team would be very grateful.

### **Thank you, Saint John's musicians -**

Congratulations to our Music Director, Mun-tzung Wong and the Choir of Saint John's. They have been working hard throughout the entire Fall season and we can never fully express our appreciation for their work. They sang the *Victoria Requiem* for All Souls' Day and are preparing for Advent Lessons and Carols on Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> December. Of course, they will be doing special music for Christmas Eve in addition to all the regular Sunday fare.

### **Special Thank You -**

We send out a special "thank you" to the Thrift Shop volunteer staff. Their efforts are truly appreciated by everyone and make a valuable financial contribution to Saint John's. In addition, they also coordinate help to the needy of our community by donating coats and other goods to outreach agencies. They closed when it became necessary due to the pandemic but returned as soon as it appeared safe for all. Thank you again!

### **Readers rota -**

The First Lesson at the Sunday Sung Mass is always read by a lay person. If you are a good reader who enjoys public speaking and would like to take part in this important ministry, please let us know so that we may include you in the rota. Readers are assigned in alphabetical order by last name on a rotating basis.

### **Flower and candle memorials -**

When putting in a request for sanctuary candles, shrine lamp candles, flowers, *etc.* from Saint Faith's Altar Guild, please allow sufficient time for the paperwork to be processed through the Parish Office. Often it is thought no memorial has been designated for the upcoming week and suddenly multiple requests are received, creating an embarrassing situation for the Guild, not knowing whose

request to honor because it cannot be established who was first. Please contact the office as soon as you are able when you would like a memorial listed. Thank you.

### **Wanted -**

New voices to be added to our choir! Our choir has been performing heroically with a bare minimum of members; just imagine the sound of the music we could create with a few additional voices. This is not a huge commitment as there are no weekday rehearsals. The current members will be delighted to make you comfortable and we will be a most appreciative congregation.

### **Votive candle offering -**

Please note that the requested donation for votive candles is now \$3.00 for the large five-day candles and 50¢ for the small ones. We have not raised the amounts in over 20 years, but for some time the actual cost per candle to the Altar Guild has exceeded the suggested donation.

### **Parish Gazette deadline -**

God willing and saints preserving, the next issue of The Parish Gazette will be for Lent. The deadline for submitting articles, announcements, photos, *etc.* for consideration to be included in that number is Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> February 2022.



## SAINT OF THE MONTH ANASTASIA 25<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER



Saint Anastasia, also known as Anastasia of Sirmium and Anastasia the Pharmakolytria or "Deliverer from Potions," is a Christian saint and martyr who suffered for Christ during the time of Emperor Diocletian's Christian persecutions (A.D. 284-305).

She is one of the seven women commemorated by name in the ancient text of the Mass.

The "passio," or suffering of, Anastasia tells that her father was a noble pagan named, Praetextatus and her mother was St. Fausta of Sirmium. They lived in Pannonia, a Roman city in what is now Yugoslavia. Because her mother was a Christian, Anastasia was baptized as an infant and secretly raised with Christian values. Following the death of her mother, Anastasia's father gave her in marriage to the pagan Publius, but she preserved her virginity.

During the persecutions of Diocletian, Anastasia visited the prisons and cared for the confessors of faith. She would feed, doctor and ransom suffering captives. Anastasia's servant informed Publius; he locked her up and beat her.

Anastasia began secretly corresponding with her adviser, St. Chrysogonus, who had gone to Aquileia. He told her to be brave, be patient and accept the Lord's will.

After the death of her husband while he was on embassy to Persia, Anastasia distributed her property to those less fortunate and suffering. She then set off to follow Chrysogonus to Aquileia. He was personally interrogated by Diocletian, but he never renounced his faith and was ordered to be beheaded and thrown into the sea.

After his death, Chrysogonus appeared to Zoilus, a priest who found his relics and foretold the martyrdoms of Ss. Agape, Chione and Irene. He asked Zoilus to send Anastasia to the three sisters as encouragement. Nine days later, Anastasia visited the sisters just before they were tortured. After they were martyred, Anastasia buried them.

Anastasia continued traveling from city to city caring for Christian prisoners. She healed their wounds and relieved their pain. She was given the title "Deliverer from Potions," because she would often heal many from the effects of poisons and potions.

Finally, she was arrested in Illyricum and taken to the prefect of the district for being Christian. He tried to persuade her to deny her faith and threatened her with torture. Anastasia could not be swayed, so she was given to the pagan priest Ulpian in Rome. He presented her with the choice between riches or suffering, luxuries or torture devices. She chose torture.

He gave her three days to reconsider. Enamored by her beauty, Ulpian decided he would defile her purity. However, once he went to touch her he was struck blind and his head burst into extreme pain. On his way to his pagan temple, he fell and died.

St. Anastasia, now free, set out to continue to care for imprisoned Christians, along with Theodota, a pious young widow and faithful helper. After Theodota was martyred, Anastasia was caught once again. She was sentenced to death by starvation and was starved for 60 days. However, Anastasia was not harmed. It is said the martyred Theodota visited her and fed her during this time.

The judge decided the prisoners, including Anastasia and Eutychianus, would be killed by drowning. They all entered a boat with holes in the base, but St. Theodota appeared to them and steered the boat to shore. Once they landed, Anastasia and Eutychianus baptized 120 men.

Following yet another escape, Anastasia was taken to the island of Palmaria. She was staked to the ground with her arms and legs stretched out and burned alive on December 25<sup>th</sup>.

St. Anastasia's relics were taken to Constantinople, where a church was dedicated to her. Later, a hand and her head were transferred to the Monastery of St. Anastasia near Mount Athos.

Much of the account of St. Anastasia's life and tragedies may be legendary. All that is certain is a martyr named Anastasia died for her faith in Sirmium and her memory is sacred.

St. Anastasia is the patron saint of martyrs, weavers, and those suffering from poison. By tradition she is commemorated at the second mass (of the Dawn) on Christmas Day.

*\*Anastasia Island is named after St. Anastasia according to information from the Historic St. Augustine Preservation Board. A 1737 map by Spanish engineer Arradondo labels the island "Santa Anastasia." Despite speculation and rumor, the island was not named for the elusive daughter of the last czar of Russia. It was called St. Anastasia Island long before her birth.*

## NEW JERSEY CHURCHES RE-OPEN AS COVID WANES



**New Jersey churches have reopened their doors as COVID wanes. But can they fill the pews?**

On a typical pre-pandemic Sunday morning, some 2,000 worshippers would flock to Mass at St. Paul Roman Catholic Church in Ramsey. These days, Sunday has a quieter vibe. The typical crowd has dropped to about 900, said the Rev. Nicholas Sertich, the church's parochial vicar. "A lot of people got used to online church services and found that more convenient," he said in an interview. "Some people who were on the fence about practicing religion took the jump into not practicing altogether."

A similar scene is playing out in churches of various denominations around New Jersey and the rest of the nation, where pews still haven't filled up even as pandemic restrictions have eased.

Faith leaders say the digital technology that kept worshippers connected during the health crisis has come with a downside: It's allowed people to grow complacent about spending Sunday mornings in their living rooms, like spiritual couch potatoes. The upshot of Zoom services may mean more people praying overall

# *The Feast of the Nativity*



## *Christmas Eve*

**December 24, 2021**

**Solemn Procession and  
Midnight Mass 11 pm**

## *Christmas Day*

**December 25, 2021**

**Low Mass 8:30 am  
Sung Mass with Carols 10:30 am**

but fewer making intimate connections to their church. It's had financial consequences as well, with weekly collections suffering.

West Side Presbyterian Church in Ridgewood, St. Paul's Lutheran in Teaneck and St. John the Evangelist in Bergenfield have seen a 50% drop in Sunday attendance, according to clergy. In Hackensack, New Hope Baptist Church has lost about 40% of its in-person congregants since before the pandemic.

The good news? Online services have helped pull some worshippers into the fold.

"We have gained new members and reclaimed members who left the church in previous years," said the Rev. Drew Kyndall Ross at New Hope Baptist. "Members who moved and never joined another church have re-engaged. Some people have been attending in person and virtually consistently but haven't joined yet, and we are excited about them connecting with us as well."

In September, a survey by Nashville-based Lifeway Research found nearly half of Americans, or 45%, said they watched church online during the pandemic, including 15% who said they didn't normally attend live services.

But there are worrying trends as well.

In March, the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University said about one in five U.S. [Roman] Catholics reported attending Mass weekly, either virtually or in-person. That was down from about 27% prior to the pandemic.

The latest challenge comes against the backdrop of a years-long move by Americans away from organized religion. Fewer than half of U.S. adults reported belonging to a house of worship in a 2018 Gallup poll, down from 70% in 1999. Among religious groups, Catholics experienced the steepest declines.

COVID added to the pressure, forcing churches around America to shutter in the name of social distancing. The Catholic Archdiocese



of Newark reopened parishes at a reduced capacity in the summer of 2020, and by May of this year, bishops at New Jersey's five Catholic dioceses reinstated the obligation for the faithful to attend Mass. But numbers still haven't returned to where they were. And with the steep decline in live attendance, collection baskets have emptied, leaving some parishes in a financial crunch. While one-third of Catholics gave to their diocesan financial appeal in 2019, that number declined to about 25% in 2020, according to the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate.

In Bergenfield, St. John the Evangelist had a \$270,000 shortfall last year and had to use a \$250,000 bequest received in 2006 to cover costs of daily operations, according to the church website. Even with online giving becoming more common, "we definitely had significant financial challenges during the quarantine and most of 2020," said the Rev. Richard Arnholds. There's some hope for the future, he added, with collection levels starting to return closer to past levels.

Catholics who kept attending Mass virtually will come back to church once they feel comfortable, said Dugan McGinley, a Rutgers University religion professor. But those who didn't keep up their religious commitment during the pandemic are less likely to return and may have "reorganized their lives" without religion.

"We've already seen a large number come back to in-person," McGinley said. "But I think it will take quite a while for the numbers to return to what they were, and some parishes may never see the crowds they used to have."

Livestreamed services are likely here for the long run, he added, especially with an aging population.

"People who are physically compromised in some way appreciate the opportunity to stay connected with their home parish rather than relying on a less personal 'Mass for shut-ins,'" McGinley said. "In fact, some parishes have invested in better technology and are reaping the benefits of reaching people outside of their usual geography."

Local clergy were optimistic. As Christmas approaches, more people are likely to return, they predicted.

"We have definitely noticed an upward trend since Labor Day, although we are still not yet at pre-pandemic levels," said Monsignor Arnholds at St. John the Evangelist. Recent events like the parish carnival and an Anointing of the Sick Mass have helped "return a spirit of increasing normalcy."

"We need to get people back to something that is truly meaningful and give them a reason to return to church," said the Rev. Sertich of St. Paul's R.C. Church, Ramsey. With Christmas approaching, "it's the opportunity to pull out all the stops and show people why faith matters."

If nothing else, the turbulence of the past two years has forced the church to innovate, said the Rev. Daniel O'Mullane, pastor at Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Boonton. During the pandemic, he regularly hosted drive-in Mass in a Walmart parking lot, and the church erected an outdoor confessional for penitents to drop in safely.

"We provided people with opportunities to worship that met their personal needs," said O'Mullane. That "kept our people active and engaged when they were most in need of what the Church has to offer."

Condensed from an article by  
Deena Yellin  
NorthJersey.com Nov. 22, 2021

# CHRISTMAS GREENS AND FLOWERS

Before we know it, it will be Christmas Eve!

Saint Faith's Altar Guild always puts a great deal of effort into making Saint John's beautiful for that joyous time from Christmas through Epiphany.

It is customary for these special seasonal decorations to be given in memory of someone who has died, or in thanksgiving for a living person or an anniversary. Simply use the form below to remember those who have died and to honor the living.

Send in your donation as soon as possible but *no later than Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2021* so that gifts may be acknowledged in the service bulletin. Please use first and last names of all those persons being remembered so that they may be properly listed.

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## CHRISTMAS 2021 FLOWER DONATION

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ ENVELOPE No. \_\_\_\_\_

IN MEMORY OF (*use full names*)

\_\_\_\_\_

IN THANKSGIVING FOR (*use full names*)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## SOME PARISH KALENDAR HIGHLIGHTS

### Advent Sunday, 28<sup>th</sup> November 2021

The Great Litany & Low Mass	8:00 am
The Great Litany & Sung Mass	10:30 am

### Gaudete Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Low Mass	8:00 am
Sung Mass	10:30 am
Advent Lessons and Carols	4:00 pm

### Christmas Eve, Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Procession & Midnight Mass	11:00 pm
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### Christmas Day, Saturday, 25<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Low Mass (of the Dawn)	8:30 am
Sung Mass	10:30 am

### The Holy Name, Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022

Low Mass	12:00 Noon
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### The Epiphany, 6<sup>th</sup> January 2022

Sung Mass	7:30 pm
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## SUNDAY SERVICES

8:00 am	Low Mass at the Altar of Christ the King
10:30 am	Sung Mass at the High Altar

## WEEKDAY SERVICES AS ANNOUNCED

Please refer to our website for the full calendar of events.

All services are in-person and livestreamed on  
Facebook and YouTube.

## ABOUT SAINT JOHN'S CHURCH

Saint John's Church was founded in the City of Passaic in 1859. Since that time the congregation has had only two homes. The first church edifice was a modest carpenter gothic structure built in 1861 approximately two blocks from here. The current building was built in 1894 in the Norman Gothic style with influence from the William Morris School, also known as the Arts and Crafts Movement, by the prominent Newark architect William Halsey Wood. No major changes have been made to the building since (with the exception of the addition of the Parish House in 1907) although many gifts presented over the years have served to beautify this holy place.

If you do not have a parish home we welcome you to join us for worship on Sundays and Holy Days:

### SUNDAYS

8:00 AM	LOW MASS
10:30 AM	SUNG MASS
HOLY DAYS AS ANNOUNCED	

REFER TO OUR WEBSITE FOR THE FULL CALENDAR  
[www.sjcpassaic.org](http://www.sjcpassaic.org)

